



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 10**

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OFFICE OF  
ECOSYSTEMS,  
TRIBAL AND PUBLIC  
AFFAIRS

March 10, 2014

Naval Facilities Engineering Command Northwest  
Attention: Ms. Kimberly Kler,  
NWTTEIS/OEIS Project Manager  
1101 Tautog Circle, Suite 203  
Silverdale, Washington 98315-1101

Re: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency comments on the U.S. Navy's Northwest Training and Testing Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement. EPA Project Number: 12-0016-DOD.

Dear Ms. Kler:

We have reviewed the Navy's Northwest Training and Testing Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement. Our review was conducted in accordance with the EPA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. Section 309 specifically directs the EPA to review and comment in writing on the environmental impacts associated with all major federal actions. Our review of the Draft EIS/OEIS prepared for the proposed action considers expected environmental impacts and the adequacy of the EIS in meeting procedural and public disclosure requirements of the NEPA.

**Project Summary**

The Draft EIS/OEIS analyzes the potential environmental impacts that could result from current, emerging, and future training and testing activities in the Northwest Training and Testing Study Area. The Study Area is made up of air and sea space in the eastern north Pacific Ocean region, located adjacent to the Northwest coast of the United States, to include the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Puget Sound, and Western Behm Canal in southeastern Alaska.

Three alternatives are analyzed. The No Action Alternative represents baseline training and testing activities as defined by existing Navy environmental planning documents, including the *Northwest Training Range Complex EIS/OEIS*, the *Naval Undersea Warfare Center Keyport Range Complex Extension EIS/OEIS*, and the *Southeast Alaska Acoustic Measurement Facility EIS*. Alternative 1 includes the training and testing activities addressed in the No Action Alternative, plus adjustments to types and levels of activities from the baseline. Alternative 2 includes all elements of Alternative 1 plus adjustments to the tempo of activities. Training would remain the same as Alternative 1, testing would increase, on average, about 12 percent over those in Alternative 1. Potential acoustic effects of proposed activities on marine mammals and sea turtles are a primary concern.

**Responsiveness to the EPA Scoping Comments**

In our April 27, 2012 scoping comments we recognized the Navy's need to conduct realistic testing and training. We also noted our appreciation for the Navy's substantial efforts to understand, minimize and eliminate the effects of naval operations on the environment. We provided several recommendations for

information that the Draft EIS/OEIS should consider in order to adequately set forth the environmental impacts of the alternatives. Below, we describe the Draft EIS/OEIS's responsiveness to our scoping comments.

#### *Maximizing Environmental Benefits*

To help ensure that the Draft EIS/OEIS - like past comprehensive environmental planning for training/testing ranges and operating areas - results in continued progress on understanding, minimizing and eliminating environmental impacts of military readiness activities, we recommended that the Draft EIS/OEIS include an alternative designed to maximize environmental benefits. We suggested decreasing the tempo of training and testing activities, adjusting the types of training and testing activities, or maximizing the use of environmentally protective elements from the Navy's 15 EISs for major at-sea ranges and operating areas.<sup>1</sup> Information in the Draft EIS/OEIS describing the Navy's requirements for adequately preparing naval forces is responsive to our suggestion that the Navy consider adjusting the tempo and types of training and testing activities.

With regard to maximizing the use of environmentally protective elements from existing environmental planning documents, we believe the Navy's effort to improve upon past processes - as described in Draft EIS/OEIS section 5.2.2.1 "Lessons Learned from Previous Environmental Impact Statements/Overseas Environmental Impact Statements" - is responsive to our scoping comment. We strongly support your effort to consider all mitigations previously implemented and adapt the mitigation assessment approach based on lesson learned from previous EISs, ESA biological opinions, Marine Mammal Protection Act Letters of Authorization, and other formal or informal consultations with regulatory agencies. As a result of your effort, we believe new environmental benefits will be achieved by your planned efforts such as the requirement for additional Navy personnel and civilian equivalents to complete environmental training modules; updated Marine Species Awareness Training to improve the effectiveness of visual observations for marine resources; and the addition of lookouts for several training and testing activities for which there is currently no lookout required. We encourage your continued efforts to improve upon existing mitigation, including through studying the effectiveness of lookouts in detecting marine mammals and other sensitive resources.

#### *Water Quality*

The Draft EIS/OEIS's Sediments and Water Quality chapter is responsive to our scoping comments because information on the following topics is included: water bodies likely to be impacted, the nature of potential impacts, and specific discharges and pollutants likely to cause impacts. While chemical, physical, or biological changes in sediment or water quality may be expected to meet applicable standards and guidelines, we encourage the Navy's continued efforts to protect sediments and water quality. Just as the Navy has replaced lead with tungsten in some munitions because of environmental concerns, we recommend your continued efforts to understand and act on evolving information about the behavior of the various complexes that tungsten forms. Similarly, we appreciate the Draft EIS/OEIS's section on Climate Change and Sediments. We encourage your continued consideration of evolving information on the tendency of metals to dissociate from particles to which they are bound in sediments under more acidic conditions. As the oceans' acidity changes, negative impacts from the Navy's expended metals may become more widespread, and present a greater concern.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://greenfleet.dodlive.mil/environment/marine-mammals-ocean-resources/environmental-planning-at-sea/navy-at-sea-environmental-impact-statements/>

### *Environmental Justice*

The Draft EIS/OEIS's information on the potential for impacts from physical disturbances to the public or reductions in accessibility is responsive to our environmental justice recommendations. Your conclusion that "there are no disproportionately high impacts or adverse effect on any low-income or minority populations." is responsive to our recommendation to include an environmental justice determination.<sup>2</sup>

### *Climate Change*

The Draft EIS/OEIS's information on the Navy's energy, environmental, and climate change initiatives - including the Navy Climate Change Roadmap - is responsive to our recommendation that the Draft EIS/OEIS describe whether and how climate change considerations have influenced decisions. We broadly appreciate the Navy's commitment to mitigating the harmful effects of climate change and specifically recognize, for example, that one benefit of local training is reducing the greenhouse gas emissions associated with transportation to training and testing sites.

### **Environmental Concerns and Rating**

While the Draft EIS/OEIS is responsive to our scoping comments, we remain concerned about adverse effects to marine mammals – including Endangered Species Act listed marine mammals. To address concerns about effects to marine mammals, we recommend the Navy continue to pursue the development of a well-designed mitigation and monitoring program in coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service. To the extent possible, please include in the Final EIS/OEIS updated results of the Navy's effectiveness assessment for lookouts and mitigation and monitoring details from MMPA and ESA consultation with NMFS.

We are rating the Draft EIS/OEIS Environmental Concerns – Adequate, "EC-1". A copy of our rating system is enclosed.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment and if you have any questions please contact me at (206) 553-1601 or by electronic mail at [reichgott.christine@epa.gov](mailto:reichgott.christine@epa.gov), or you may contact Erik Peterson of my staff at (206) 553-6382 or by electronic mail at [peterson.erik@epa.gov](mailto:peterson.erik@epa.gov).

Sincerely,



Christine B. Reichgott, Manager  
Environmental Review and Sediment Management Unit

Enclosure: EPA Rating System for Draft Environmental Impact Statements

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<sup>2</sup> Draft EIS/OEIS, p. 3.12-1

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Rating System for  
Draft Environmental Impact Statements  
Definitions and Follow-Up Action\***

**Environmental Impact of the Action**

**LO – Lack of Objections**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

**EC – Environmental Concerns**

EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce these impacts.

**EO – Environmental Objections**

EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no-action alternative or a new alternative). EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

**EU – Environmentally Unsatisfactory**

EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potential unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS stage, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

**Adequacy of the Impact Statement**

**Category 1 – Adequate**

EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis of data collection is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

**Category 2 – Insufficient Information**

The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for EPA to fully assess environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses or discussion should be included in the final EIS.

**Category 3 – Inadequate**

EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which should be analyzed in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the draft EIS is adequate for the purposes of the National Environmental Policy Act and or Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.

\* From EPA Manual 1640 Policy and Procedures for the Review of Federal Actions Impacting the Environment. February, 1987.